

Intellectual Imperialism

Mr. William T. Couch, director of the University of Chicago Press, has disconcerted his brethren of the book publishing trade by a series of highly embarrassing questions about what he considers a scheme for exploiting the Marshall Plan in the interest of an export market for American books. In an angry manifesto, called *It Costs Us Nothing*, Mr. Couch quotes from a resolution adopted by the directors of the American Textbook Publishers Institute. This resolution, it appears, urged—

the Government of the United States to specify, when loans are made to other countries, that a certain fraction of dollar exchange be allocated to the acquirement of scientific, technical and educational books of United States origin, and to provide, when drawing up trade treaties, that reasonable quantities of such books and periodicals shall be supplied as well as capital and other goods.

Mr. Couch also quotes an official of the American Book Publishers Council as indicating that this ingenious scheme for extending American culture and learning through power politics originated with the Department of State. This official, it appears, stated that—

in the past few months State Department officials have several times approached us, rather than we them, saying that if they could be assured of the interest of American publishers in developing the foreign market for their books, the department was prepared to make an all-out effort in support of its profound belief in such a program.

What appears to have outraged Mr. Couch is the unseemly alacrity and gratitude with which both the Textbook Publishers Institute and the Book Publishers Council have accepted and are supporting this scheme. This, says Mr. Couch, is pure cartelism. Here are "groups of private entrepreneurs cooperating in seeking world markets . . . using Government support . . . seeking to force their products on other countries. In what way do these American book publishers' cartels differ from Nazi cartels?" If the Europeans, demands Mr. Couch, "really want American books," and we lend them the money to buy, can't they be trusted to make their own allocations . . . without benefit of U. S. State Department advice or pressure?"

In discussing the argument that the influence of American books is needed abroad to counteract the effects of communism and to inculcate the American ideals of freedom and democracy, Mr. Couch is equally caustic. What if "the rest of the world doesn't want to learn all that Americans want to teach? How long will it be before we will adopt as a regular procedure the counsel of the fanatic, the splitting of heads to put sense in them?" It seems to us that, if the facts are as Mr. Couch states them, his points are well taken indeed. The plan, as Mr. Couch describes it, is a new and dangerous wrinkle in imperialism.